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"Amor scribere jussit."

A knowledge of Anatomy does not contribute to the discrimination or cure of diseases.

THE study of anatomy is at present, regarded as the foundation of the healing art. Now, what is more inconsistent? and what deserves more to be exposed than this absurdity? This is to mistake the means for the end; and to sacrifice much of the time to the erection of the scaffolds, which ought to have been employed in more gradually raising, and therefore more firmly consolidating the building. It seems to be the fashion to represent a knowledge of anatomy as the almost exclusive foundation of pathology and therapeutics; and to pretend to estimate the practical skill of the physician by the extent of his anatomical information. A little inquiry will perhaps be sufficient to demonstrate the inaccuracy and futility of the arguments, or rather of the argument, (for I have heard but *one*,) which is generally brought forward on this topic.

The argument to which I allude, is perhaps at once the most plausible and weak,—the most conclusive apparently, but really the most futile, that the fancy can easily conceive. It is this. "He who is most accurately acquainted with the structure of the *machine*, must be necessarily the best able to detect its erroneous movements and obstructions, and to remedy its disorders."

This position is unquestionably true, in relation to a clock or a steam engine; and, with the ignorant or superficial inquirer, the sound of the word *machine*,

as applied in common to the animal and to inanimate structures, and the slight analogy between the two in a few obvious properties, stand in the place of logic, and supercede the trouble of research. But the inference from the machine to the animal body, and its complex economy, will appear, upon the slightest investigation, to be incorrect, and the practical conclusions altogether absurd. For what do they imply ?

In the machine, the *principle of motion* is under our command and direction, we have access to all its parts, and can remove them individually, or disjoin and reunite them collectively, at pleasure ; the source, the *proximate cause* of obstruction and disorder is obvious to our senses, and subject to local renovation by our hands, without detriment or inconvenience to the rest of the structure ; and so on. Upon these points, there is not a tittle of resemblance in the animal economy, and its internal diseases. We have not the *principle of life* in our power, to suspend it, renew it, or impart it at pleasure ; the sources of obstruction are hidden from our view ; and we can neither change, remove, or restore a part, we cannot even interfere with its action, without influencing the whole system ; nor do the derangements of the system consist in general in change of *mechanical* apposition, connection, or motion, which altogether constitute the derangements of a machine. What, then, we ask, does this absurd comparison imply ?

It implies that anatomy can teach us the *proximate cause of every morbid appearance*, and impart to us the power of *adapting local means of correction to all the disorders of the animal system :* just as Hudibras says,

> " As if a man should be dissected,
> " To find what part is disaffected !"

and as if we could replace our cuttings, vein, muscle, and nerve, much to the man's advantage! We must apologize for commenting on so palpable an absurdity. How lamentably deficient our knowledge of proximate causes is, and how inadequate our means of removing

them, is best known to the most experienced in our art.

Destitute, then, as we are, of the information and powers of the mechanist, the internal diseases of the animal body being rarely the result of mechanical change, and our remedies never acting by a mechanical principle, it is obvious that we cannot build our practical skill upon a knowledge of mechanical structure.

The great discoveries in anatomy, by which any approach to a correct and rational knowledge of the animal structure has been attained, were accomplished within the last two centuries; some of the most important of them, even the circulation of the blood, and the existence of an absorbent system, at a less distance of time. But is our knowledge of diseases of such short duration? Were not diseases described and distinguished by Hippocrates, with an accuracy that remains the admiration of his successors, upwards of two thousand four hundred years ago? Do not his nomenclature and his diagnostics, confirmed and repeated by succeeding ages, remain, in a great measure, to give a character and complexion to the writings and systems of our own time? Have not the practitioners of Rome, among whom Celsus, Aretæus, and Galen, stand pre-eminent, left us unrivalled memorials of their extensive pathological information, ignorant as they were even of the circulation of the blood? The fact is too obvious to be enlarged upon, and the inference is self-evident. A knowledge of diseases, having for centuries preceded the accurate knowledge of anatomy, cannot depend upon the latter as its cause or foundation.

But if the notion of the *mechanism* of disease should still predominate, and it should still be insisted that great improvements have been accomplished by the moderns in physiology, pathology, and practical medicine, since the great discoveries in anatomy were made, while we recollect how much the advancements in physiology are to be attributed to the successful cultivation of all the departments of natural philosophy,

within the same period, and of chemistry in particular, let us inquire to what extent the improvements in pathology and therapeutics are connected with anatomical science? How far the four leading points in the view of the physician, viz. the discrimination of diseases, the anticipation of their changes and progress, the indications of cure, and the knowledge of the powers of remedies, can be aided by minute anatomical skill?

What do we learn respecting the nature and distinctions of cholic and enteritis, of cholera, dysentery, and diarrhœa, by a knowledge of the coats of the intestines, or of the arteries and nerves which ramify upon them? What has been added to our knowledge of the various modifications of fever, remittent and intermittent, endemic and contagious, symptomatic and idiopathic, since the secrets of the circulation were laid open, and the extremities of the nervous system traced? and what light has a minute acquaintance with the structure of the brain contributed towards explaining the nature and diagnosis of palsy, of epilepsy, of hysteria, of tetanus, of idiotism, or madness? It is obvious that the anatomists have not been our teachers upon these points. It is impossible that they can elucidate all the variety of diseases, to which one and the same structure is subject, by the most intimate knowledge of its component parts. By tracing the vessels and nerves in the cutaneous papillæ, for instance, they can neither distinguish nor understand the better the multiplicity of cutaneous diseases, the small-pox and chicken-pox, the measles and scarlet-fever, the scaly, scabby, papular, and pustular eruptions, and "all the thousand ills the *skin* is heir to."

There are many phenomena of disease, which would appear to lie within the province of the anatomists, which are nevertheless altogether unexplained by any thing which the knife has discovered. They have not enabled us to point out the cause of the various morbid sympathies between distant parts; between the parotid glands and the testes, for example; between the uterus and the mammæ; between the kid-

neys and the stomach; the stomach and the brain, &c. Nor have they detected the connecting medium, by which some of the extraordinary *metastases* of disease occasionally take place.

But if the nature and distinction of diseases be learned independently of minute anatomical knowledge, the prognosis, or the anticipation of the future progress of the symptoms, (a very important part of the knowledge of the physician,) is more completely unconnected with that sort of knowledge. Personal observation, or a knowledge of the precepts, deduced from observation by others, can alone teach us this. How could an acquaintance with the *torcular Herophili* or the *sella Turcica* lead us to anticipate delirium, in fever, when we marked an increasing headach, with redness of the eyes, and restlessness? Or how could a dissection of the cutis, cuticle, and *rete mucosum* teach us the danger of small and confluent eruptions of variola, and the comparative safety of large and distinct pustles, however numerous? This needs not illustration. The man of observation and experience, who might be ignorant of the existence of cuticle and *rete mucosum*, would be the best physician in all such instances.

Farther, if both the knowledge of the phenomena of diseases, and of the anticipation of their future changes, be the result of other studies, than those of the anatomist, the indications of cure also are evidently little benefitted by accuracy of anatomical observation. In determining on these indications, the physician is not led to think of the minute structure, of the congeries, of arteries, and nerves, and cells, in the viscus or part diseased; his considerations regard the strength or debility of the system, the duration of the disease, the condition of the functions respectively, the probable events which must follow, the particular temperature and peculiarities of the constitution of the patient; or his views are frequently altogether Empirical, which implies that reasoning, whether upon structure or other data, is nearly out of the question. Can a physician recommend with skill the administra-

tion of purgatives and emetics, by an acquaintance with the structure of the stomach and bowels? Would he not apply with equal propriety and success, the stimulus of the aspersion of cold water, or the pungency of hartshorn, to a person in syncope, although he were ignorant of the nerves of the skin, or of the Schneiderian membrane? Were pleurisies and inflammations of the lungs more successfully treated, after the arteries and veins of the lungs were described, and their cells injected with quicksilver? Or has diabetes been more effectually relieved, since the circulation of the kidney has been exhibited in a tree of wax? It would be as reasonable to affirm, that the practice of *nutrition* is more completely accomplished since the stomach was accurately dissected, and that the numbers of fat people, now existing, owe their *corpulency* to the discovery of the lacteals and the thoracic duct! Neither Bartholin nor Pecquet, we will venture to assert, ever dreamed of such a result of their discoveries.

It cannot for a moment be supposed that anatomy has contributed to teach us the nature and powers of remedies, any more than it has aided us in the choice of our food. For our knowledge of the virtues of remedies, we cannot be indebted to the dissecting knife. Observation and experience, grounded generally on accident in the outset, have been the sole foundation of our acquisitions respecting the nature of these our instruments, without which all our anatomical and physiological information were vain. It was not from anatomical considerations, that Sydenham was led to adopt the cool treatment of small-pox, that Currie learned the advantages of cold affusion in fever, or that Rollo deduced the utility of animal diet in diabetes mellitus. In a word, the greatest anatomists have not been the greatest improvers of medicine, nor among the most eminent of its practitioners. On the contrary, the most distinguished physicians and acknowledged benefactors of the medical art, have not been remarkable for the cultivation of anatomy.

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. We wish not to disparage the study of anatomy; to which we acknowledge that physiology owes much of the philosophical character, which it has now assumed, and that pathology has not been without its share of benefit from its cultivation. All that we contend for, is, that we can now have every advantage from the discoveries of anatomists, without spending our time in those long and ardent investigations with the knife, which originally led to their accomplishment; that by far the major part of the science and art of medicine is altogether unconnected with anatomical information; and that the actual observation of the phenomena of disease and the operation of remedies, is the great foundation of the physician's power and usefulness. Let a man be the most correct and minute anatomist, if he have not long and laboriously attended to the appearances and the treatment of diseases, however plausibly he may reason on the processes and functions of life, and explain their interruptions and modifications, which constitute health and disease, his knowledge will be but the vain speculations of the theorist, he will be *practically* more ignorant, than many an uneducated nurse in an hospital. Let us not mistake the plausibilities of physiological and pathological reasoning, for actual knowledge, for they have their epidemic periods of change; nor let us believe that the curious part of our inquiries, are always absolutely useful.

Having endeavoured to shew how little the knowledge, that constitutes the physician, is connected with minute anatomical observation, and how absolutely and indispensibly necessary is the cultivation of *clinical* medicine, or the actual superintendence of the treatment of diseases, as the almost exclusive source of pathological and therapeutic science; we can only add, that a general knowledge of the structure of the animal body, especially of the structure, relative situation, and connexion of the viscera, appears to be all that is requisite to form the most able physician.

DR. THACHER'S TESTIMONY.

"It was the observation of Professor Cullen, one of the most celebrated writers on the *Matera Medica* that any age has produced, that the writings on that subject are, for the most part, a compilation of *mistakes* and *falsehoods*. And he adds, that these errors arise from the obstinacy of old professors, and their blind attachment to theory, as well as the vanity of young physicians, being the authors of observations that are hastily made and dressed in the closet; and besides, many of the operations of nature have been falsely imputed to the effects of medicines, pretendedly founded on experience. So distant are they from a true and faithful delineation of nature. Allied to these evils are the numerous *frauds* and *sophistications* of chemistry and pharmacy, and the reprehensible practice of administering nostrums or secret remedies, and other popular impositions, the fertile and disgraceful sources of empiricism.

"A knowledge of the medicinal powers, possessed by the indigenous vegetables, of which our own soil is so abundantly productive, should be deemed an acquisition of primary importance. However disparaging to medical erudition, it is but justice to confess, that we are indebted to the bold enterprise of illiterate pretenders, for the discovery of some of our most active remedies. It is, therefore, extremely desirable, that our *patriotic physicians* and *citizens* should unite their exertions in the investigation of native substances, and institute such chemical analyses and experiments as will tend to elucidate their specific properties."—See Dispensatory, p. 374.

REMARKS ON THE ABOVE.

1. The doctor says, that Cullen, one of the greatest medical writers, declares that the writings on medicine "*are for the most part a compilation of mistakes and falsehoods.*" If this statement is true, and doubtless it is, I ask in the name of common sense, what confidence the sick can place in such writings, or in those

who learn to administer to the sick, according to the books founded on *mistakes* and *falsehoods?* For the books now studied by medical men, appear to be of this kind.

If, as Dr. T. says, the medical writings consist for the most part of *mistakes* and *falsehoods*, may we not say the same of his on the same subject? A little attention to his book will prove this. He tells us that *arsenic*, *nitre*, *mercury*, &c. are fatal poisons; with many other minerals; and that they are good medicines. He says of *arsenic*, page 289—"The fumes of *arsenic* are so deleterious to the lungs, that the artist ought to be on his guard, to prevent their being inhaled by the mouth. When the quantity is so very small as not to prove fatal, tremours, paralysis, and lingering hectics, succeed." On the same leaf of his book, he says—"Though the most violent of *mineral poisons*, *arsenic*, according to Murey, equals, when properly administered, the first medicines, in the class of tonics. The employment of oxide of arsenic is now extended to remitting fever, periodical headach, dropsy, hydrophobia, lepre elephantiasis, and certainly with safety and success," &c. Is all this a *mistake* or a *falsehood?* He says it produces a very bad effect on the man, and yet is good medicine.

2. In addition to *mistakes* and *falsehoods*, the doctor says, these errors arise from the *obstinacy of old professors* and their *blind* attachment to theory, and the vanity of young physicians, who have hastily prepared something which did not overcome the operations of *nature*, which affected the cure, instead of the vanity of the young physician.

Dr. Hervey, who discovered the circulation of the blood, says, that he did not recollect more than one physician over forty, that embraced the new doctrine of circulation; the young men believed, but the old were *obstinate*, and maintained a blind attachment to the old theory, that the blood stood still. It is the same now. The old doctors keep on, blister, bleed, and shave the head—give calomel and jalap, opium, &c. come life or death. This they are acquainted with, and do not mean, it seems, to learn any more.

3. The doctor adds—"Allied to these evils are the numerous *frauds* and *sophistication* of chemistry and pharmacy, and the reprehensible practice of administering nostrums or secret remedies, and other popular impositions, the fertile and disgraceful sources of empiricism."

What more can any man say against the common mode of treating the sick, than is here said by doctor Thacher? He says in chemistry and pharmacy, *frauds* and *sophistications* are practised, even such as are disgraceful. Among these may be reckoned *Balm of Quito*, *Cough Drops*, and possibly Conway's Drops, Relf's preparations, and such as fill nearly one side of a news paper, beginning with—"*When we contemplate*," &c. and—"When a cure can be obtained for one dollar, or two at the most," with this addition—the cure of a young lady, a certain lady, or gentleman, &c. &c. Where is the person to be found who has been cured by the wonders of chemistry, or the preparations of minerals; even such as would kill a well man if he should take them?

4. We are told that about all the valuable discoveries in medicine are made by other men, and not by physicians. He says, "*However disparaging to medical erudition, it is but justice to confess, that we are indebted to the bold enterprise of illiterate pretenders, for the discovery of some of our most active remedies.*"

What a curiosity is here communicated! *Medical erudition* outdone by *illiteracy!* It is disparaging to medical erudition indeed, that an *illiterate pretender* should know the most! The amount is this—medical erudition is ignorant of *active remedies*, and to be *illiterate* is to be the best acquainted with medicine. We suppose of course that the learned doctors are such as Paul described—"Ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." The fact appears to be this:—that which is found by any but doctors to be good medicine, is *quackery!* but after the doctors learn it from *bold pretenders*, the same is good medicine, or as the doctor says, "some of *our* most active remedies."

5. The doctor says—"It is therefore extremely desirable that our *patriotic physicians* and *citizens* should unite their exertions in the investigation of native substances, and institute such chemical analyses and experiments, as shall tend to elucidate their specific properties."

We are, as Elihu said, according to the doctor's wish. Dr. T. has wisely distinguished between *patriotic physicians* and *citizens*, and such as are of another spirit. We publish to the world an investigation of native substances; the excellencies of such medicines as are natives of our own country, and expect opposition only from *physicians* and *citizens* destitute of *patriotism*.

"EVEN AS ONE OF THEIR OWN POETS HAS SAID."

[*Med. Newspaper.*

On the absurdity of medical theory and hypothesis, and the absolute necessity of experience, founded on facts, derived from actual observation; exemplified in the interesting controversy between the Dogmatists and Empyrics.

The Dogmatic physicians maintained the necessity of a knowledge of the four following subjects, in order to be able to cure diseases; namely, 1st, of the occult and essential causes of disease; 2d, of the evident causes; 3d, of the natural actions of the constitution, (or physiology) and, lastly, of the internal parts, or anatomy. 1st, by the occult causes, they meant the essential principles of the constitution, or of animal life, under its various conditions of health and disease. And they held, that it was impossible to cure disease, if we are ignorant of the circumstances in which it consists; for that different methods of cure must necessarily be requisite, if a redundancy or deficiency of the four elements were the cause of disease,

according to the hypothesis of some philosophers; or if all diseases consist in depravations of the fluids, as was the opinion of Herophilus; or, in disordered respiration, as Hippocrates imagined; or in the passage of the blood into those vessels, which naturally convey air, causing inflammation; and that inflammation exciting the commotion observed in fever, according to the supposition of Erasistratus; or in the obstruction of the invisible pores, by the corpuscles, or atoms, as Asclepiades contended. Against this system of reasoning by hypothesis, beyond the bounds of experimental enquiry, the Empyrics objected upon the most irrefragable principles. "The attempt," say they, "to scrutinize the occult principles of animal life, is fruitless; for 'nature is incomprehensible,' we may ascertain what she performs, but how she performs it, is to us inscrutable. And the very dissentions among the theorists, and the difference of their accounts of those operations, evince the inscrutability of the subject. They cannot all be right; and why should we believe the statement of one, rather than that of another? Why is Hippocrates more entitled to credit than Herophilus, or Herophilus than Asclepiades? It is obvious that we cannot decide in favour of the opinion of any of them, either from their arguments, or their practical authority; for the arguments of each may be sufficiently plausible and consistent with probability. The husbandman and the pilot are not qualified for their respective occupations by theory and discussion, but by practice and experiment. Indeed, if reasoning could enable a person to cure diseases, the philosophers would necessarily be the best physicians; whereas, we observe that they are gifted with an abundance of words, but possess very little skill in the art of healing.

2d. With respect to the evident causes, the Dogmatists understood by that term, the obvious exciting causes of diseases, such as heat and cold, fasting, and excess in eating, &c. to the operation of which diseases are often observed immediately to proceed. The Empyrics admit the utility and im-

portance of attending to these causes; but they contend that, however obvious they may be in many instances, the method of cure is nevertheless not apparent from them, as in ophthalmia, or a wound; but is ascertained only from experience.

3d. The natural actions of the body, a knowledge of which the Dogmatists maintain to be absolutely necessary to the physician, are those operations of the constitution, which the moderns comprehended under the term physiology; namely, the nature of respiration of the concoction, or digestion of our food and drink, and its distribution to the different parts of the body, which it nourishes; of the "rise and fall" of the arteries; of sleeping, walking, &c.

"Without an acquaintance with the causes of these actions," say the rationalists, "it must be impossible for any one either to suppress incipient diseases, or to cure them when they are completely established." But in this point again there is great dissentions among them: some of them, following the hypothesis of Erasistratus, maintain that the food is concocted by mechanical attrition; others, after Plistonicus, the disciple of Praxagoras, assert that digestion is produced by the putrefaction of the food; while others prefer the opinion of Hippocrates, and contend that it is effected by heat. The disciples of Acclepiades, again, affirm that all these hypotheses are idle and futile, for that there is no such thing as concoction, but that the alimentary matter, crude as it is received, is distributed through the whole body. Various as these opinions are, however, they do not dispute the necessity of accommodating the food of the sick to the nature of the function; that is, if the concoction be the result of attrition, then such food should be selected as is most easily broken down; if it is to be effected by putrefaction, then such food is to be chosen as is most readily putrescent; if by heat, such as most effectually cherishes heat; but if there be no such process as that of concoction, then all these kinds of aliments are improper, and such only should be taken as most completely resists all change. In the same

manner, they contend, when a difficulty of breathing occurs, or a morbid degree of sleep or watchfulness, that physician will be the most capable of curing them, who is acquainted with the nature of these functions.

Against this doctrine of the Dogmatists, it is evident that the arguments of the Empirics were equally conclusive, as against their preceding hypotheses, respecting the occult causes. Their statements, that the very difference of the theories of the Dogmatists, implies their want of foundation, and that the mode in which nature operates being incomprehensible, we must be content with learning what she operates are obvious refutations of the futility of these, and indeed of all other hypotheses. "It is of no importance," say the Empirics, "to inquire in what manner the distribution of the aliment through the body is accomplished; our only useful inquiry is, what sort of aliment is most easily distributed; and whether digestion is performed by heat or putrefaction, or whether it is not a digestion, but a distribution only, is altogether immaterial, provided we know, from experience, what is most easy of digestion, or the contrary. "For" they continue, "the art of medicine, even in its infancy, was not deduced from such hypothetical reasoning, but from experiments. Whence it was observed, among those who were sick, and without physicians, that some, prompted by appetite, had immediately taken food at the beginning of the illness; while others, loathing victuals, had fasted altogether; and that the diseases in those who abstained from food had been alleviated. It would be remarked, too, that some took food in a paroxism of fever, others a little before it came on, and others again after its remission; and it would agree the best with those who ate after the removal of the fever. In like manner, it would be seen, that those who took food freely in acute diseases, suffered an aggravation of their symptoms, while the abstemious would not thus suffer. These and similar circumstances, occurring daily, would be noted by diligent observers; and what had been seen to succeed most generally, that they afteward pre-

scribed to the sick. Such was the origin of the art of medicine, which, in consequence of the recovery of some, and the death of others, taught us to discriminate the useful expedients from those that were pernicious: and when remedies were discovered by such experiments, then men began to reason about their operation; for the art of employing remedies was obviously not the result of reasoning, but explanatory hypotheses were sought for after the remedies were ascertained.

4. The Dogmatists contend, in the last place, that as pains and various disorders attack the internal parts, no person in their opinion, can apply proper remedies to them, when diseased, if he is ignorant of their situation and appearance. Hence, they affirm, that it is necessary to dissect the bodies of the dead, and to examine the viscera and intestines: and they extol the method of Herophilus and Erasistratus, who procured criminals out of prison, by royal permission, and having dissected them, contemplated the parts which nature had before concealed; and remarked their position, colour, figure, size, arrangement, softness, hardness, smoothness and connexion, as well as their processes and depressions, or what is inserted into and received by each part. "For" say they, "when any internal pain occurs, the seat of that pain cannot be ascertained by one who is ignorant of the situation of the viscera and intestines; nor can he cure any part diseased, who does not know what the part is. Besides, if the viscera, happen to be exposed in consequence of a wound, if the observer be unacquainted with the natural appearance of each part, he cannot discover what is sound, and what injured or corrupted, and therefore, is not qualified to cure that part which is diseased. Even external remedies are applied with much more judgment by one who knows the situation, figure, and size of the internal parts."

To these arguments, the Empirics reply, that "the preceding doctrine of the dogmatists were only idle and frivolous, more particularly when it is considered, that some of the information which is sought after,

cannot be thus acquired at all, and that the rest may be ascertained without committing sacrilege upon the dead. For the colour, smoothness, softness, hardness, and other such qualities, are not the same in the body when dissected, as when it was sound: even in bodies that have suffered no violence, these qualities externally are often changed by fear, grief, hunger, indigestion, fatigue, and a thousand other inconsiderable affections. Whence it is still more probable, that the internal organs, which are still more delicate than the external, and to which even exposure to the light is new, must be changed by the severest wounds, or rather by such mangling. Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that appearances are the same in a man already dead, as during life. It is clear, from the arguments already stated, that it is not necessary ever to mangle dead bodies; which, though not cruel, is loathsome to the sight, and whatever can be learned, respecting the living, may be acquired during the treatment of their diseases and wounds." There is one point which could not be well introduced under any of the preceding heads, which the Dogmatists constantly threw out against Empirics, namely, that new diseases occasionally occur, for the cure of which, consequently, practice and experience have afforded no rules or information; whence, they say, it is necessary to investigate their causes, both evident and occult, without a knowledge of which no mortal can find out why one curative expedient ought to be adopted rather than another. But the reply of the Empirics to this point, is not less accurate and satisfactory than in the preceding parts of the dispute. "New diseases," they say, "requiring new remedies, seldom if ever occur; but if any unknown disorder should appear, the physician would not require the hypothetical doctrines about occult causes to direct him in his method of treatment: he would immediately observe to what known disease it was allied in its nature and symptoms, and employ the remedies which experience had shewn to be successful in a

similar malady ; and by such resemblance he would be able to discover a proper remedy."

There is obviously good sense, and sound philosophy in this doctrine of Empiricism. It points out the true mode of investigating the phenomena of nature, by unwearied experiments ; the mode which Bacon laboured to inculcate on the Dogmatists, and hypothesis mongers of his age ; which Newton successfully pursued, and which hasted the philosophers of latter times to the developement of that fund of natural knowledge in the sciences of electricity, chemistry, mechanical, and every branch of natural philosophy by which modern inquiry is distinguished. Compared with this species of investigation, how futile are the speculations, misnamed philosophy in the schools, relative to elements, and essences, which had no existence, except in the imagination of the disputants. For it must be observed, that the ancient Empirics did not disregard the dictates of reason and reflection ; they only deprecated the application of them to circumstances out of the reach of the senses, and beyond the scope of experiment. Those mischievous principles and practices, which their successors, or at least those who have subsequently assumed the title, have made the refuge of ignorance and craft, cannot be alleged against them. This is evident from the clear and explicit statement of their tenets, which Celsus has transmitted to us. No longer engaged in studying systems, and averse to speculation, even in regard to the symptoms of diseases, the Empirics exerted their whole faculties in investigating the powers of medicinal substances, which laid the foundation of their pre-eminence in pharmaceutical skill, and gradually effected those changes in the art of medicine which subsequently occurred. The properties of the productions of nature, especially of the vegetable world, were extensively examined ; and the instruments of the physician, by which he could influence the functions of the living body, were greatly multiplied. The ancients introduced sedative and narcotic remedies ; on the liberal use of which

probably depended the superior reputation acquired by some of them over their more cautious antagonists. Of this superiority, a singular instance occurs in the many existing testimonies to the fame of Heroclides of Tarentum, before mentioned, who is recorded as the most successful physician in any age or country in the world. But unfortunate for mankind, the important discoveries made by the Empirics have been lost, and the present age has to lament the want of their remedies.

MEDICAL RETORT.

The editor of a medical journal having occasion to quote a passage from the work of a reverend divine, appears a little chagrined at the sentiments it expresses. "The author of 'Lacon,'" he says, "has taken the liberty of casting his little bit of sarcasm, too, on the profession of physic; speaking of physicians, he says, 'they have been tinkering the human constitution four thousand years, in order to cure about as many disorders: the result is, that mercury and brimstone are the only two specifics they have discovered. All the fatal maladies continue to be what they were in the days of Paracelsus, Hippocrates, and Galen—*approbia medicorum.*' We might retort upon the reverend author of the work cited, by asserting, with much more truth, that *his* brethren, the priests, have been preaching up holiness four thousand years, and yet, according to their own confession, the people are now more wicked than ever they were. If this be not a pretty significant *approbrium theologorum*, we know not what is."

The candid confession of Dr. Richard Reece, of London, member of the Royal College of Surgeons, author of the "Dictionary of Popular Medicine," "Medical Guide," "Chemical Guide," corresponding member of the Society of Practical Medicine of Paris, &c. &c. &c.

"The charter of the 'Royal College of Physicians' is found to contain a singular licence, which is, a permission to any one and every one to practise the healing art by the use of *herbs only*. Now we really do consider this as ample a permission as any man would require, for poor must be the resources of that physician's mind, and very narrow his knowledge of medical botany, who could not from the vegetable kingdom alone cure most of the diseases of the human frame: even the specific of mercury, if we were driven to the necessity of a substitute, might probably be rivalled in some of these productions of nature. We know not whether we have most reason to hail the discovery of mercury as a blessing, or regard it as a curse, since the diseases it entails are as numerous as those which it cures. Our best informed dentists declare that they can clearly witness the progress of the use of mercury, in the increasing diseases and decay of the teeth. There are serious objections also to other articles of the metallic world: antimony, iron, and arsenic, are dangerous remedies in the hands of the ignorant, and mankind, perhaps, in the aggregate, would be benefitted by their expulsion from medical practice."

We heartily rejoice that physicians in England begin to open their eyes to the errors and dangers of their profession. They 'see men as trees, walking.' Some of them at least. have discovered by woful experience that the present system of practice is daily sweeping thousands from the earth. The pillars of the faculty begin to tremble, and ere long the building will fall to the ground. This confession of Dr. Reese, the great advocate for regular practice, is like '*apples of gold in pictures of silver.*' We hope our readers will pay the

greatest attention to his remarks. How shocking to *common sense*, that after all the boasted discoveries of four thousand years, this noted physician should declare that 'we know not whether we have most reason to hail the discovery of mercury as a blessing, or regard it as a curse, since the diseases it entails are as numerous as those which it cures. Why then we would ask this learned physician, is it not abandoned? ought not any medicine manifestly a curse. to be laid aside? Would to heaven that the loss of the teeth were the only objection to its use! This is one of the smallest evils it produces; it induces a variety of the most serious diseases, and very commonly death itself.* Again, this candid practitioner judiciously remarks, "there are serious objections also to other articles of the metallic world: antimony, iron, and arsenic, are dangerous remedies in the hands of the ignorant; and mankind, perhaps, in the aggregate, would be benefitted by their expulsion from medical practice." Is not this paradoxical, that physicians persist in giving medicine that they themselves acknowledge to be pernicious? How inconsistent! How unphilosophical! This is altogether inexplicable. Who dare trust their lives in the hands of those who assert that they give 'dangerous remedies;' especially when it is stated by the same writer, that poor must be the resources of that physician's mind, and very narrow his knowledge of medical botany, who could not from the vegetable kingdom alone cure most of the diseases of the human frame. When will mankind begin to examine into the present mode of treating the 'sick'? Some of the most respectable merchants in Boston, are so disgusted with the mischief and deplorable consequences resulting from the practice of medicine, that they have formed themselves into an association, and agreed to discountenance minerals of all descriptions, and to use only the productions of our own country. A gentleman, not long since, observed that he was confident that from the number of deaths he had known occa-

* The pernicious effects of mercury will be shown in a future number of this work.

sioned by surgical operations, and the administration of deleterious medicine, more persons had been killed by physicians and surgeons, than now lived upon the habitable globe. It is sincerely hoped, that the Lord, in mercy to mankind, will hasten the time when the present practice of physic and surgery will be completely overthrown, and another raised upon the ruins thereof. Indeed a radical reformation is desirable, if no other benefit should accrue from it than to prevent the destruction, misery, and deaths it occasions. Minerals are valuable. Iron is well calculated for stoves and plough-shares. Quicksilver is admirably calculated for coating looking-glasses, &c. &c. Antimony, oil of vitriol and arsenic, are articles of the utmost importance and utility to the manufacturer, but were never designed to be given for medicine.

Mr. Barry, a respectable citizen, sometime in the course of last summer, applied to an apothecary for a dose of the cream of tartar, in place of which he received tartar emetic; he had no sooner taken a small portion of it, than he was thrown into the most violent puking and spasms. A physician was immediately sent for, who administered fifteen grains of white vitriol. Death soon followed. Query, which killed the man, the tartar emetic, or the white vitriol?

"*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"—ST. PAUL.

The great question at this day among the common people is—"do you not think our minister knows? Does not the *doctor* know best? He is a man of great learning; has been to college, and studied physic in America and Europe. He must know better than such as never studied physic," &c. Such facts lay the foundation for strong reasoning in the minds of many. Paul mentions some of great learning, who were at the same time ignorant of the truth. Many

men have become extensively acquainted with many things, which are no benefit to themselves, or people in general.

In things called religion, men may be learned in all the commands and doctrines of men, and at the same time ignorant of the truth as it is in Jesus. Many can repeat a particular creed, and understand all the ceremonies peculiar to their church, and at the same time be so ignorant of the truth as to "deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

In things relating to *disease* and *medicine*, men may be in the same situation; "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." I consider the greater part of those called *learned doctors* in this situation. They are called learned men; but what great benefit is their learning to the sick and distressed? It is said they understand anatomy, and know the name of every part of a man. All this they may know, and yet not know how to cure a sick man. A person might be employed as a cook who understood all this, and at the same time be poorly qualified to prepare food for the hungry. Is there any man on earth who will contend that to be well qualified to prepare food for the hungry, a person must understand anatomy? I think not. If all who learn the parts of the human frame could cure the sick, and if no others could cure them, we might say, such only know the truth concerning the sick.

It is a common thing for the learned doctors to wait for the sick to die to know what caused their death. After they are dead, they open them to find what made them die. After doing this, they are no better qualified to cure another with the same disorder, than before.

The truth concerning this subject is simply this—*What is the disease, and what will remove it?* A man may understand all the parts of a man, and be ignorant of the disease, and the medicine that will cure; and a man may understand the disease and how to remove it, and know but little of the manner in which the

body of man exists. The latter is best for the sick, but both are the most desirable.

When men undertake to attend the sick as a trade, they are about certain to take that course which will be most to their own advantage; but when they undertake to cure the sick they must understand the nature of disease, and what medicine will remove disease from the man. When they know this, they come to the knowledge of that truth, by which a man may be made free from disease. [*Medical Newspaper.*

MEDICAL LECTURES.

A gentleman authorizes us to state, for the information of those of his fellow-citizens who are as little experienced as himself in the *science of anatomy*, that he, with several other persons, visited a chamber in Market-street, a few days since, and were much surprised with what was, to them, a novel exhibition. Human bodies, sacrilegiously stolen at midnight from the grave, in various stages of putrefaction, and exhibiting various operations of the dissecting knife, filled the atmosphere of the room, with the most nauseous exhalations. On one end of a table lay a body, dismembered of its limbs; on another, the head, robbed of its contents, was placed as if to gaze in mockery at the mutilated trunk, which it had once surmounted. Arms, legs, feet, ears, hearts, liver, and lights of human beings, apparently of all sizes, from six inches to six feet in length, male and female, were scattered in profusion and disorder about the room, Here was a bowl containing the brains of some new-laid corpse, and there a tub filled with "guts and garbage," while on a slow consuming fire, were laid the parts for which there was no further use, frying in their own fat and marrow. The furniture was besmeared with blood and filth, and every nauseating substance belonging to such an establishment without regard to decency and cleanliness. The slaughter-houses at Brighton and

Cambridge, where cattle and sheep are butchered by hundreds, are perfumed palaces compared with this school of anatomy!

The gentleman who communicated these particulars and requests their publication, has left his name, which is at the service of any one who may doubt the correctness of the representation.

On the above we have only to remark, that the scene which has thus excited the horror and indignation of an individual, is not a novelty in this town. Ten years ago, we attended a part of a course of lectures, where similar objects of disgust were so numerous and offensive, that we never thought of it since without loathing. The establishment in Market-street, to which our informant alludes, is not the only one of the kind of which this metropolis can boast. There are, or have been, several of the kind. Dissections of the human body, are undoubtedly serviceable to medical science;* but whether more is not lost to humanity than is gained for science by the practice, we think, is a question, which is, at least, deserving of consideration.

The Board of Health, with their characteristic promptness, have ordered the owner of the building in which the room above alluded to was located, not to let it in future for such purposes; and have also ordered the occupant to remove forthwith every particle of the nuisances, and to have the room cleansed and fumigated, to the satisfaction and approbation of the resident physician of the board.

[*Med. Newspaper.*

There are several of the most important functions upon which the knowledge of the structure of the dead body, though ever so minute and perfect, could throw little or no light; nay, that there are some morbid circumstances and indications in the living body, ascertained by empirical observation, in which mere anatomy is more apt to mislead than instruct.

* This we deny.—Ed. Reformer.